



Raju the rag picker

Everyday I used to watch out of my room's window, a boy dark in colour holding a bag on his shoulder. I was curious to know about him so one day I caught hold of him. He was scared of me but later he opened with me. I offered him some biscuits. He told me that his name was Raju and he picked waste

things from road and sold them to a junk dealer. In this way he earned a little money which he handed over to his mother so that his little brothers and sisters may have meal once a day. When I asked about his father I saw tears in his eyes. He told me that his father was good for nothing as he earned nothing and snatched money from his mother to drink wine. When Raju stops him from drinking he beats him mercilessly. I was pained to hear his story. The maid who works in our house has also a similar story. Her husband is also a drunkard. What becomes of the kids in such families? They never have sufficient to eat. Poor kids they are starving. My mother is kind enough to provide food to our maid so that the hungry children may have something to fill their stomachs with. Poorer a family is, the more kids they have. The kids never go to School as no one will pay their fees. When I was very young I hated such dirty kids and thought just because of them our country seems hell like. Now I am big enough to know that they are sufferers themselves. Who should be blamed for their condition?

When anyone asks their parents they give excuses that their economic condition is poor so they can't think of giving any facility to their children. They were themselves brought up in utter poverty and suffered themselves a lot in their childhood. I think one thing can be done at least that they should not give birth too many children, as the sufferers will be many and a big family is the cause of their poverty. Who can give a sound advice to such illiterate people, they have many excuses. They blame others and especially the Government. They think Government should give them money and food. What is the need of drinking wine? I want to ask them this question. A bottle of wine is costlier than meals for a day and if the family is starving the father has no right to waste money for bottle. Just because of such selfish and unthinking fathers, the poor children are undernourished. They can never think of being educated when their stomachs are empty. Such underprivileged children become criminals later to fulfill their needs. As long as such fathers are there many Rajus will have to pick dirty things from roads

and have to kill their feelings. I feel myself lucky to be born in an educated family. Raju comes to my house daily and I have taught him to write a few words. I give him my worn out clothes and sometimes he gets food. Raju now goes to a night school and wants to pass 5th class. Our Government is providing Education for free to all children up to 14 years and still some children are so unlucky not to get this benefit. All school going children are provided free meals in State Govt. Schools. We do not need Rajus anymore. We wish to see happy and contented children in our country.

Raju has become more confident and now he talks of big things. He celebrated his birthday last month with me. Raju can't give up his job of picking junk as in this way he supports his family. He says needs compel one to grow up mature before time. My friend Raju has shown me that phase of life I had been unknown to, a life of wants and sufferings. I pray to God to end miseries of such children so that they may enjoy simple pleasures of life.

By- Sandeep